

Checklist for using media

When media are used, they must be adapted to the situation of the client group. In each individual case we have to decide how best to adapt the media and the message.

The checklist below consists of groups of questions and individual questions that have to be worked through in the project. They help to reveal the facts of the situation. The best method is to take several sheets of paper, write at the top which of the media is being checked, for example "enlarged photographs", and then go through the list, noting answers and problems. The five groups of questions deal with "aims", "general conditions", "cost-benefit effects", "adaptation to client groups" and "situations".

Group 1. Aims

- Has the content been clearly delineated and how does it relate to the aims of the overall project?
- Should the attention of people in the client group be drawn to any particular facts?
- Is the object of the media input to mobilize and motivate?
- Are the media being used as a means of stimulating activity on the part of the client group?
- Is the aim to show processes and events over time?
- Is the intention to give concrete help to solve problems?
- Do certain innovations require technical or social back-up?
- Do the objectives of the media input seem operationally feasible, and will we be able to check that they have been achieved?

Group 2. General conditions for the use of media

- Are the conditions satisfactory in terms of organization, time, finance and personnel?
- Are there enough media staff, equipment and materials available to reach the members of the client group?
- Do all the people in the client group have radios or access to radios?
- Is special building work necessary before information media can be used (rooms, seats, etc.)?
- Can the planned media be easily transported to other locations?
- Are technical facilities available for use by media staff at each location?
- What is the quality of the repair and servicing facilities?
- Are there any special requirements regarding storage (dust, heat, humidity, etc.)?
- Are there any special requirements regarding the production of media aids (e.g. experts and foreign teams necessary) or can they be produced without outside help?
- Is electricity necessary?
- How complicated is equipment to operate? Are experts needed?
- Are media facilities already available that are being fully utilized?

- Who decides on the use of media (who controls access to media)?
- How much and what kind of pre-testing is necessary?
- Is the media service connected organizationally or through its staff with the client group?
- Can the client group influence the content and the input of media?
- What is the level of training and qualifications of the staff using the media?

Group 3. Cost-benefit effects created by the use of media

- Can the media be reproduced (how often)? Is electronic storage possible?
- How long and how safely can the material be stored (under what conditions)?
- Are the materials always available (for which individuals, under what conditions)?
- Is repetition possible (for the same client group, at the same place)?
- What are the costs of equipment and materials (total and per head of the client group)?
- What are the costs of producing videos, films, Powerpoint presentations, slides, broadcasts, etc. (total and per head of the client group)?
- What costs are created by the dissemination process (personnel, transport, etc.)?
- How big is the client group?
- Do the members of the client group really have enough in common to be reached by a single means of communication?
- Are the people in the client group already in touch with each other (through cooperatives, self-help groups, village communities, etc.)?
- Are there already multipliers who can be approached to spread the message among the client group?
- Are existing multipliers being supplied with supplementary information (individuals or institutions, e.g. branches of cooperatives, hospitals, etc.)?
- Have tests shown that the planned media are useful and effective? Have the right methods and messages been chosen for communication, i.e. does the client group talk about them?
- In summary: are the media really more cost-effective, and is the learning effect greater than the use of manpower alone?

Group 4. Adaptation to the client group and to problems

- What are the criteria for determining the content?
- What methods have been used to test the material in the client group (and with what results)?
- How is the media input evaluated (the methodology and the content; what are the criteria of success or failure)?
- Have the best methods of communication been chosen, bearing in mind the client group and their problems (give reasons)?
- Are moving pictures necessary?
- Is it necessary to use colors? Does this create supplementary costs?

- How faithfully is reality reproduced?
- Is the client group able to form opinions about the messages?
- Are their opinions noted and taken into account when the media are used again?
- Has the material been specifically developed or appropriately adapted for the recipients and local conditions?
- Is the training of the media staff relevant to the problems and the situation?
- Is the content concrete or abstract?
- Do the solutions shown to the client group really correspond to their scope for action, given their material, psychological, social and political constraints?
- How and where is information about the know-how, practical skills and motivation of the client groups stored (to whom is it available) (⇒ II.C3)?
- How do communicators and members of the client group work together (places, individuals, topics)?
- How is an information unit produced? What is the production process in detail?

Group 5. Adaptation to various situations

- Does the use of media depend on the seasons (technically or in terms of content)?
- Can the information be easily adapted to new situations?
- Is the use of media tied to instructors?
- How are language barriers overcome (several dialects in a small area)?
- Can the media be adjusted and adapted (after the first time they are used in the field)?
- What transport is required?
- Can the media materials be reproduced at local level (in local studios, by existing staff, etc.)?

Another way of checking is by comparison with a standard medium. For very remote regions with a low level of literacy and lack of electricity and good road access, the standard medium of media-supported communication is flannelgraph (⇒ II.D6 and ⇒ II.D7 ⇒ SAVILE 1965, 77-79).

"Flannelgraph is a set of distinctly cut and brightly colored pictures backed with cheap flannel which can stick easily to such fluff background as blanket, flannel, and also beaverboard or rough hardboard... Flannelgraph is most useful in the teaching of specific topics to groups of 20 to 30 people but of little or no use in a large rally situation. It has the advantage of being transportable, durable, artistic, and captivating, as well as being an incentive to the class to participate in the work which is being done. Its use also facilitates concentration on one point at a time and makes recapitulating easy. It is inexpensive and easy to prepare. However, it is only effective if the user is conversant with it, active and able to show initiative in adapting it to local needs; and it is essential, in order to avoid boredom in the class, not to use the same picture over and over again." (ANONYMOUS 1958)

Table 1: Criteria for selecting media for training and extension in remote rural regions, applied to the flannelgraph method

Financial, logistic and organizational criteria	
Costs of production and use and of any maintenance of equipment Foreign exchange needs Maximum number of participants per presentation or event Is electricity needed? Grid connection, voltage regulator, generator, battery? Is blackout necessary? What are the requirements regarding transport equipment and routes? Must wear and tear and frequent repairs be expected? Can the media be reproduced simply and locally? Can the entire field staff use the media? Can the media be produced swiftly and independently of specific events? Can the media material still be altered after production? Does dependency upon foreign technology or services result? Is the presence of staff trained in the subject matter and the method necessary? Can the material also be used by other local services?	Very low, possibly paper, paint, glue Low Up to 30 desirable, up to 100 possible No, but with generator and lighting the favored evening time can be used No None, transport is possible by foot or by bicycle No, the pictures must be protected from rain Yes, manual copies, photo-copying or silk-screen printing, hand-coloring Yes Yes Yes No Yes Yes
Methodological, pedagogic and cultural criteria	
Can statements or course content be developed systematically? Can sequences of action and developments over time be presented? Are picture elements mobile, or is the sequence and positioning fixed? Can distracting details in the display be avoided? Does the use of the media have an educational and training effect upon field staff, too? Are links built to oral culture and storytelling traditions? Are the persons and localities depicted locally adapted? Is the language locally adapted? Local languages, figures of speech, proverbs, comparisons? Can a series hero be established and retained? Is the presentation comprehensible? Concepts, symbols, semantics?	Yes Yes Mobile Yes Yes, very much so Yes, this is essential Yes Yes, this task is possibly left up to field staff Yes Yes, questions can be raised, unknown symbols can be introduced successively
Can the field staff and client groups participate in designing the medium? Is the presentation a monologue? Can one ask it rather than say it? Are discussions stimulated within the client group?	Yes, this is essential Dialogue is essential, asking rather than saying is highly recommendable, this stimulates discussion

Any other media option can be checked for its suitability, if there are enough advantages of not using a flannelgraph picture series, by going through the set of questions in ⇒ Table 1. (HOFFMANN 2002,116f.):

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Compiled by:

Rolf SÜTZER, Volker HOFFMANN